

REMARKS

Claims 1-20 are pending. By this Amendment, claims 1 and 5 are amended to better distinguish over the prior art. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 since the amendments: (a) place the application in condition for allowance (for the reasons discussed herein); (b) do not raise any new issue requiring further search and/or consideration (since the amendments amplify issues previously discussed throughout prosecution); (c) do not present any additional claims without canceling a corresponding number of finally rejected claims; and (d) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. The amendments are necessary and were not earlier presented because they are made in response to arguments raised during the telephonic interview. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

The courtesies extended to Applicants' representative by Examiner Grainger during the telephonic interview conducted on February 9, 2005 are appreciated. The reasons presented at the interview as warranting favorable action are incorporated into the remarks below and constitute Applicants' record of the interview.

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Office Action's indication that claims 4, 7, 10-18 and 20 contain allowable subject matter. However, for the reasons discussed below, Applicants respectfully submit that all claims 1-20 are allowable.

The Office Action objects to the drawings under 37 C.F.R. §1.83(a) for failing to show a non-contact type fixing device or a fixing device having heated rolls as claimed and described in the specification. 37 C.F.R. §1.83(a) provides that "[t]he drawing in a nonprovisional application must show every feature of the invention specified in the claims. *However, conventional features disclosed in the description and claims, where their detailed illustration is not essential for a proper understanding of the invention, should be illustrated*

in the drawing in the form of a graphical drawing symbol or a labeled representation (e.g., a labeled rectangular box)." (Emphasis added). Fig. 2 was amended for clarification purposes to clearly show that the non-contact type fixing device, e.g. an oven, and the heated rolls are used in the secondary fixing step. It is submitted that both an oven (as a non-contact fixing device) and heated rolls are conventional features known to one skilled in the art. Thus, there detailed illustration is not essential for a proper understanding of the invention. Moreover, the oven (as a non-contact fixing device) and heated rolls are properly shown in Fig. 2 and in compliance with 37 C.F.R. §1.83(a) using a labeled rectangular box. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the objection to the drawings be withdrawn.

The Office Action rejects claims 1-3, 5, 6, 8, 9 and 19 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Schlueter (U.S. Patent No. 5,784,679) in view of Kanbayashi (U.S. Patent No. 5,281,504). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

In particular, neither Schlueter or Kanbayashi, either alone or in combination, disclose or suggest an image forming method including at least fixing plural toner layers to a surface of a transparent substrate in a primary fixing step, and fixing the primarily fixed plural toner layers in a secondary fixing step under lower atmospheric pressure than the primary fixing step, as recited in claim 1.

Schlueter discloses an image drying and fixing apparatus for affixing an image to a copy substrate. Specifically, Fig. 2 in Schlueter discloses that a belt 86 is transported, together with a copy sheet 54, through a nip 100 defined by rollers 96 and 98 for *applying mechanical pressure* to the copy sheet 54 to force resin or pigment particles of the developed image 50 into the fibers of the copy sheet 54. See col. 7, lines 45-54. The *mechanical contact pressure* applied between the rollers 96 and 98 may be generated by urging the two rollers against one another or merely from the weight of the upper roller disposed in contact with the lower roller.

The image drying and fusing system in Fig. 2 may also include an optional radiant heater 44 situated within the oven 40 and positioned subsequent to the image impacting rollers 96 and 98. See col. 8, lines 46-55. The radiant heater 44 may comprise a pair of infrared quartz lamps 45 and 47 mounted in a reflector assembly 49 for radiating thermal energy on the copy sheet 54. The thermal energy provided further drying on the image on the copy sheet 54 before the sheet passes out of the oven.

Kanbayashi discloses a laminate film suitable for providing a transparency for an overhead projector is formed by disposing an absorbing layer on a substrate.

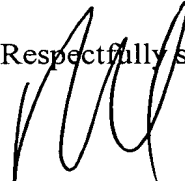
In contrast to the claimed invention, neither Schlueter or Kanbayashi, either alone or in combination, disclose or suggest an image forming method including at least fixing plural toner layers to a surface of a transparent substrate in a primary fixing step, and fixing the primarily fixed plural toner layers in a secondary fixing step under lower atmospheric pressure than the primary fixing step. The Examiner asserted during the telephonic interview that the secondary fixing step in Fig. 2 of Schlueter is carried out under a lower pressure than the primary fixing step because the primary fixing step uses rollers 96 and 98 for *applying mechanical pressure* to the copy sheet 54 and the secondary fixing step does not use the mechanical contact pressure. However, Schlueter fails to carry out the secondary fixing step under lower atmospheric pressure that the primary fixing step.

Kanbayashi fails to compensate for deficiencies in Schlueter. Accordingly, any combination of the applied references would not have resulted in a device that better reduces the generation of air bubbles in the toner layers during the fixing process so that blisters and voids will not be produced. Because it would not have been obvious to combine the applied references to arrive at the claimed invention, it is respectfully requested that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-20 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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